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## A Change for Progress

### Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard means viability for business

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI  
 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When a few citizens rallied together to change the name of Union Avenue to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard 14 years ago, the Renaming Committee was met with opposition.

Though some entrepreneurs strenuously objected to the change, and even appealed to the Land Use Board of Appeals, others saw the renaming as a chance for new hope along the strip vilified for its boarded up storefronts and rundown appearance.

here because of the name change.

Larry Matthews, owner of Yam Yams on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, said the name change was a step for progress. He had marched for civil rights in the 1960s.

"Once the name changed, they started fixing up the avenue and businesses started to move in," Knauls said. "It really helped the city and the community having a street named after Dr. King."

Knauls made the former Cotton Club a premier hotspot for jazz. He established the former Geneva's nightclub that also attracted prominent local and national jazz and contemporary musicians. Knauls and his wife currently own Geneva's Shear Perfection, a salon proudly on Martin Luther King Jr. Boule-



Paul Knauls Sr.

*Traditionally they would take the worst street in most cities—not a place that you would actually visit—and call it Martin Luther King Jr.*

The businesses against renaming the main thoroughfare through northeast Portland after King were Union Avenue Glass, City Antiques, City Liquidators, Roth BMW, Burns Bros. Inc. and Anderson Bros. Inc.

Those business owners were shot down when the city attorney ruled that a renaming committee didn't need popular approval to change the street name. The boulevard we know today as Martin Luther King Jr. was voted in by a 5-0 City Council vote in April of that year.

Portland's former Mayor Vera Katz was given credit for much revitalization that happened along the boulevard since the name change, making it a safer and more attractive place for businesses to be.

Paul Knauls Sr., a longtime African-American entrepreneur, said he moved his business

vard for 13 years.

"It's made our community really proud to have a street like this in the community," Knauls said.

According to Knauls, Portland's Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is one of the best in the country, and the only one that has a statue of King along the stretch.

"Traditionally they would take the worst street in most cities—not a place that you would actually visit—and call it Martin Luther King Jr.," he said. "In Portland, we took the street named for Dr. King and made it one of the most viable ones."

Although Matthews says his business, at its current location for five years, was not affected by the name change, he believes it was deserved.

"I think we needed something to commemorate Dr. King. It was a good change for progress," he said.



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*Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in a monologue rather than a dialogue.*

—Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

## Worship for King

Area residents are invited to honor Rev. Martin Luther King's legacy by attending the annual citywide service presented by the Albina Ministerial Alliance, a group of African-American clergy.

The worship celebration is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 16 at the newly constructed Emmanuel Temple Full Gospel Church of God, 1033 N. Sumner St. Immanuel Pastor C. T. Wells will host the service and Dr. Mark Strong of Life Change Christian Church is the featured speaker.

For more information, contact Dr. Rev. Leroy Haynes Jr., MLK worship celebration coordinator, at Allen Temple AME Church.

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